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C O N F I D E N T I A L SECTION 01 OF 02 SKOPJE 000106

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TAGS: [PREL](#) [PGOV](#) [MK](#) [KS](#)

SUBJECT: MACEDONIA: POSITIVE REACTION TO KOSOVO STATUS
PROPOSAL

REF: A. STATE 12957

[1](#)B. 06 PRISTINA 1121

Classified By: P/E CHIEF SHUBLER, REASONS 1.4(B) & (D).

SUMMARY.

[1](#)1. (C) The GOM, public, and media response to UN Special Envoy Ahtisaari's Kosovo status proposal has been uniformly positive. Government leaders are especially pleased with the proposal's language addressing the issue of demarcation of the Kosovo-Macedonia border. They are concerned, however, not to jump the gun on the question of recognition, preferring to stay "in the middle of the pack" and follow the U.S. or EU lead. Now that -- per the draft proposal -- the demarcation issue has been resolved to Macedonia's satisfaction, we can expect the GOM to redouble its readiness to play a constructive role in supporting the final status process. End Summary.

AMBASSADOR BRIEFS PRESIDENT AND FOREIGN MINISTER ON AHTISAARI PROPOSAL

[1](#)2. (C) The Ambassador delivered ref A points on UN Special Envoy Ahtisaari's Kosovo status proposal to President Crvenkovski and FM Milososki in separate meetings late in the afternoon of February 2. In addition to the points outlined in ref A, the Ambassador conveyed the proposal's language on border demarcation, which for Skopje has been a perennial concern. Commenting on the demarcation language, which is nearly identical to points Macedonian officials have proposed to us in the past (ref B), she cautioned both interlocutors against triumphalism or attempts to exploit the demarcation language through public statements or posturing. She also cautioned that the language is in draft, though she indicated we do not foresee any significant re-negotiating during the coming weeks.

POSITIVE GOM REACTION ON BORDER DEMARCATION LANGUAGE

[1](#)3. (C) Both Crvenkovski and Milososki responded positively to the language on border demarcation, and both agreed the government should not publicly trumpet the inclusion of language on demarcation that is nearly identical to their previous proposals on the matter. Crvenkovski said the formulation was "correct," that it did not allow for reopening the 2001 Skopje-Belgrade agreement delineating the

border (ref B), and that it contained a useful timeline for completing the demarcation process. FM Milososki echoed Crvenkovski's remarks, noting the timeline, the reference to the 2001 agreement as the basis for demarcation, and the fact that the language called for a technical commission to begin the demarcation process. He added that the GOM's public response to the Ahtisaari proposal would highlight the fact that it had "addressed our concerns."

TIMING OF KOSOVO RECOGNITION -- DESIRE TO STAY IN THE MIDDLE OF THE PACK

14. (C) Crvenkovski said it would be crucial for Macedonia to stay in close touch with the USG regarding when the timing would be right to establish diplomatic ties with Kosovo. If the Contact Group was unified and a UNSCR was easily passed, it would be easy for Skopje to time its recognition announcement. If not, however, the GOM would watch closely the position in Brussels -- of both the EU and NATO -- as "the way out for us." He was concerned that if Tirana was among the first to recognize Kosovo, Macedonia would be left in the remaining group of three countries comprising Kosovo's neighbors and would face a difficult choice. The government did not want to "burn bridges" to Belgrade, but it also wanted to support US policy.

15. (C) Crvenkovski said he did not believe Belgrade's threat to sever ties with all countries that recognized an independent Kosovo, but he did believe the Serbian government would want to "hurt Montenegro and Macedonia" if they were at the front of the pack of countries recognizing Pristina. It would be best for Macedonia "not to be in the first group, but also not to be in the last group of countries" in that regard. FM Milososki told the Ambassador that an earlier GOM

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position aiming at coordination with Montenegro on recognition timing would be difficult to achieve. Podgorica was preoccupied with other issues, he said, and there many pro-Serbia elements in that country. Macedonia would therefore look to follow an EU common position on recognition.

NO LINKAGE OF KOSOVO STATUS TO GOM INTERNAL PRIORITIES

16. (C) Crvenkovski asked the Ambassador to convey to Prime Minister Gruevski and to Foreign Minister Milososki the message that it would not be productive to link other issues (the name issue, a date for beginning EU accession negotiations) to the status process. He said the Gruevski government should be warned against diplomatic improvisation or "clumsy statements." The Ambassador agreed, and said Macedonia could best support the status process by demonstrating that its political institutions were functioning and contributing to political stability. She made that point in her meeting with Milososki, who assured her the GOM would avoid political rhetoric linking the status process to other issues.

COMMENT -- SATISFACTION ALL AROUND

17. (SBU) Ethnic Albanian and ethnic Macedonian political party leaders have been positive in their public response to the Ahtisaari status proposal. Media and public reaction have been equally welcoming. Now that the demarcation issue -- per the draft proposal -- has been resolved to Macedonia's satisfaction, we can expect the GOM to redouble its willingness to play a supportive role in seeing the Kosovo status process through to the end.

MILOVANOVIC